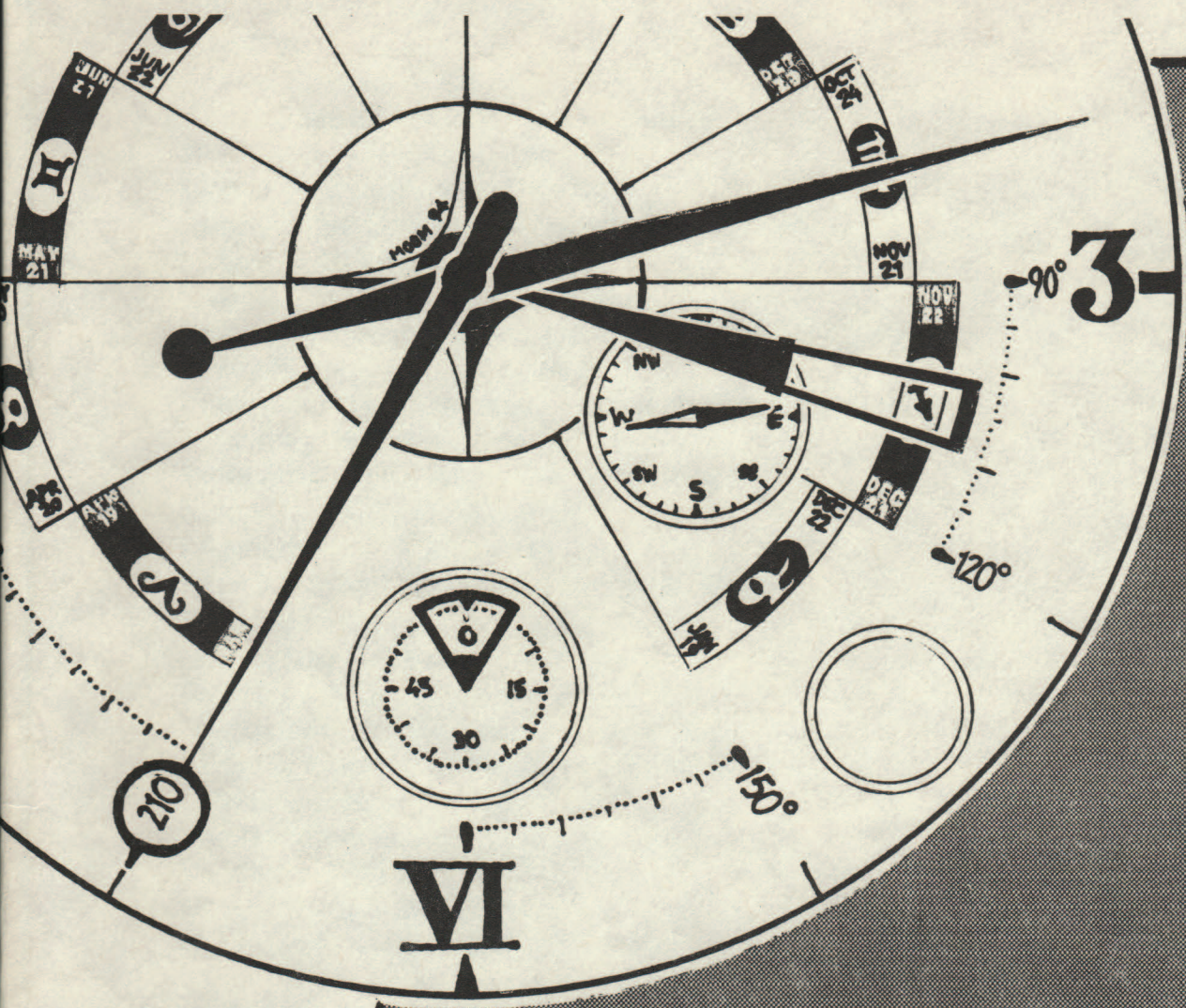




E D G E

CITY
94

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Views From The Edge

Resurrecting Edge City from the dead became a dream of mine in the Spring of 1994. That year I talked to Louise about how I wished that someone would start Edge up again. She looked at me and said, "Why don't you do it?"

I decided to give it a try. I hosted an open mic reading that semester and I was shocked at the number of people who showed up. Not only did they show up, but a large number of them read as well. This convinced me that there was enough interest to put out a magazine.

Early this semester, I had a meeting for anyone interested in helping out with the mag. Seven people showed up, and six of those seven have stuck with it. Enter Kate.

My first lesson was that putting out a magazine is a hell of a lot of work. One person who had been extremely helpful to me in those first few weeks was Kate Griffith. I decided that I needed a Co-Editor. At the time, I was looking for someone energetic, and someone who would be around after I graduated to keep Edge City from going back into extinction.

And since I'm never going to stick to one major and graduate, I'm the lucky gal who gets to carry the torch. Should either one of us ever board another "USAir" plane, Louise will be looking for a replacement. I bet they come a dime a dozen.

Yeah, well anyway, here the magazine is. We've made some mistakes, I'm sure, but we've also made some good changes. So for me after several cups of coffee, many chewed finger nails, numerous sleepless nights, and one black party dress later, it looks as if we've done it.

He's the Queen of Melodrama. But he was serious about the party dress. Maybe those of you who missed this semester's reading will think twice before you miss the next one. We have lost a lot of sleep, a lot of bone mass from caffeine over-load, and a lot of sanity, but here it is, and we really hope you like it.

I just hope that someone reads the damn thing. Yeah, me too. Let us know if you read it, there could be some money in it for you. Or at least a black party dress.

Before this gets out of hand, there's about eighty million people we ought to thank. First and foremost, I think we should thank Louise for putting up with us. She's an amazing woman for all that she's been put through over this magazine.

As the Queen of Melodrama moves over, I would like to thank everyone who submitted to us. I was expecting to be lucky if we received thirty submissions. Forty was a dream. The final count was seventy-seven. Unfortunately, we could not publish everyone who submitted, but please don't be discouraged from submitting in the Spring.

Thanks to our staff— The editorial staff deserves a big raise after reading those seventy-seven submissions, all in about two days. And Mitch— We didn't even have a table of contents for him to work from when he laid the magazine out. Two days before Thanksgiving break, and we wanted the poor guy to "wing it."

If you've made it this far through our caffeine induced diatribe, then we're assuming that you intend to read the magazine, and we thank you for that. Let us know what you think of it. You could even drop a letter to us, why not, Dan will.

And anyone who would like to help out any time in the future is welcome. Just let us know; look for the posters; come to the readings; SUBMIT!!

Yes, submit to us. After all, we may not be deep, but we know how to spell Philosophy. He made sure to type that very carefully.

So, that's it. Have fun reading it, Kids!

Clint Shulenski & Kate Griffith

Edge City Staff

ADVISOR:

LOUISE (I'M HAVING A BABY) BLUM

CO-EDITORS:

KATE (SOMEDAY I'LL OWN A LLAMA) GRIFFITH

CLINT (I LOOK BETTER THAN YOU IN A PARTY DRESS) SHULENSKI

EDITORIAL STAFF:

HEATHER (GURU) MADDEN

AMY (CRASH -N- BURN) YORK

KATE (I FELL OFF THE SIDEWALK) SERRA

TOM (IT'S FOR MY BACK) CAULFIELD

TRISHA (I READ TWO OF 'EM) SLUSSER

LAYOUT EDITORS:

MITCHELL (UNCLE CHIP) HILLMAN

JEANNE (JUST LEAVE A MESSAGE) SPENGLER

COPY EDITOR:

KATE (MAYBE NEXT ISSUE) GARLOFF

Submissions Policy

- We reserve the right to print only materials selected by the editorial staff, and which follow the guidelines set in this policy.
- We do not accept hand written drafts.
- Drafts should be typed on one side of the page only.
- One draft per type-written page.
- Each piece submitted should include a title.
- Limit of seven submissions per person per issue.
- A real name, and a way to contact the author (preferably a phone number or an address) are required, though pseudonyms may be used at the request of the author.
- Drafts will only be returned if the author contacts the staff after the issue has been printed. We can be contacted through Professor Louise Blum.
- We reserve the right to hold any submissions we may wish to consider for later publication.
- We pay in lollipops: One per poem; Two per story.
- We do, however accept large financial donations and Llamas.

OBGYN

When raspberry gelatin
goes ruined you feel
a certain sense of
failure at being a
woman, so easy
how can you screw
up gelatin but you
mourn a space then
you toss it in the
sink and pour scalding
water to break it
make it degenerate
till it's a free flow
even ho, open your legs
and let them go
at it with duck bill
cold metal scraping
the bowl, spoon on
ceramic like a hawk
screech, banshee wail to
sharpen the knife for carving
on the potter's wheel
paralyzing my nerve
holding my mind holding
my hand I forget
to breath remind me
reminds me of bright
blood clinging, sliding off
the instrument a clarinet maybe
emitting pitiful sounds
pitch high making
its way toward the
drain bleeding
me of my life's blood
and I hurt
and cry, and still
feel naked

by Mandy Jayne Banning

*"The torpid artist
seeks inspiration at
any cost, by virtue
or by vice, by friend
or by fiend, by
prayer or by wine."*

*--Ralph Waldo
Emerson*

ABSENT FATHERS

Nirvana unplugged
And began Alive
13 years old alone
When his real father died.

Breakdown,
Choking lawnmower.

Mind's well leaking,
Rusted out holes
Where they escaped from.

I like listening to the sound
Of a tuneless tape playing
When all the songs have gone out
And have stopped echoing
Inside my head.

Where does the music go
After it plays?

Into rewind
Drugs and more drugs
Fast forward
Until I die

She said she saw a woman
In a beautiful suit.
But she wasn't completely

Naked and no make-up.

I tried to tell her
She had it all wrong
With my eyes
But that's not where
They were looking.

Where does the music go
After it plays?

And the little boy
Was a girl
Who had no father.
The woman in her
Eyes bleeding water
Because he was dead.

And the woman
Was her father
Feeling sorry for himself
Because he had no children.

She cried.
She'd kill herself
If her real Mother died.

Only Mother knows
Where the music goes
After it plays.

by Aimee York

Hourglass

Hips for childbirth,
Hips for wide load,
Hips for a woman,
Not for me. . .
I would chainsaw them off
If I thought it'd help.
I hate these hips of mine.
They don't hold my pants up,
They make me look like
I don't really know. . .
If they were just love handles,
I could lose the weight,
But these are solid bone.
"You have great hips for
childbearing."
Fuck You—
Why I'm built like this?
I'll never know.
"Killer hips for a girl."
Thanks a lot.

by Mitchell L. Hillman

Death Does the Laundry

Dirty old men think
Dirty old thoughts, in their
Dirty old minds, thinking
Dirty old things about their
Dirty old world.
Clean new babies, wrapped in
Clean new blankets;
Clean new bodies with
Clean new faces and
Clean new minds.

One day, the new becomes
the old.
Every day, the clean becomes
the dirty.
Yet, as always, Death does the
laundry.

by Joe Healey

*"Jazz will endure
as long as people
hear it through
their feet instead of
through their
brains."--John
Philip Sousa*

in April

Jazz iz
handz. pressed.
hips. legz.
trebling
soul
unlocked.
Rain iz
comfort alone
asks
"listen"
list—ten
lis

-en.

murmur, murmur

Rain iz
jazz pressed
handz
legz
trebling
hips
soul a
lone comfort

murmur

"listen"
asks
lis—ten
lis

en.
unlocked

murmur

trebling unlocked hands, pressed rain on soul legs,
hips on alone, asks "listen" listen listen
. / . / . / murmur murmur. / . / . /
. / . / Jazz iz rain. / . /

by Heather M. Madden

Live Strobe Light To the bug on my window

Clinging to the mesh,
Scaling the smooth glass
of my bedroom window,
I watch you as the strobe-like
Light of your back brightens up the
night—
Makes you appear to
twist and writhe,
as though you suffer.
But I know you. I know how you
appear, and I know
what you are—
Beautiful creature.
You beacon to me
from out there—
Reminding me of good days,
young days
of catching you in
trial-sized Maxwell House instant
coffee jars,
tiny holes poked in the lids
so you can breathe.
And I remember you
being red and green
in the eyes of this child.
Mom denies your true color to this
very day.

by Kate Griffith

Brown Paper Bag Song

soft thud.
On the ground and I
can hear the rasp of breath
like the crushing of a
brown paper bag.

my father
said, "make it quick."
rabbit twitching,
whites of eyes begging me
for death.

But you,
you just stare.
fingers stirring
the silent ruby stream.
The rasp of a
brown paper bag crushing
and unfolding in your lungs.

I hum a tune to the
rhythm of the bag and think
about that rabbit
while watching
you quiet on the floor

makes me want to sing.
and when I begin, a final,
frustrated sigh escapes you—
eyes rolled back.
the rhythm of the bag stops.

I remember now that you never
liked my singing anyway.

by Heather M. Madden



Heaven (Through a Glass, Darkly)

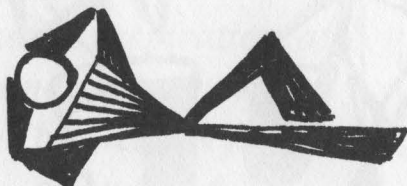
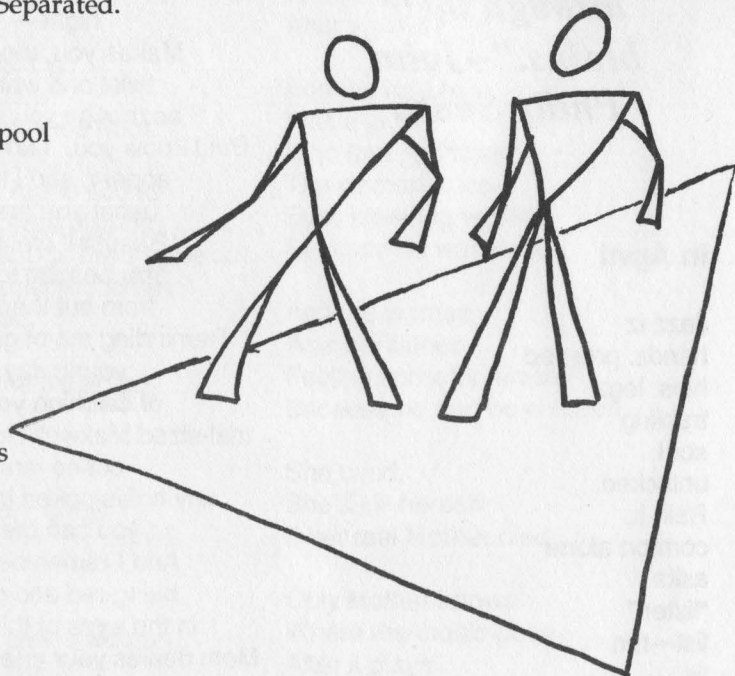
By the time
We finally got to the falls
 on Lambs creek
My body and mind
 Had come unwound
Like strands in rope
 Separated.
Did you see that Beaver
 It was a muskrat
 It was brown and round
 And slipped to the slime pool

Blue-green algae
 Is talking
But I don't know its language
 The message is clear though.
 The world (translucent and painted now)
Seethes into my skull
It is time now to wade upcreek
Green, grass, leaves, moss
 The chloroplasts in a euglena
My body is not communicating with headquarters
 Leave the driving to us
 My mind controls
 But no longer needs to
 Consciously
The water to my knees
 The perfect May sky
Reflects on the mercurial
 surface
As though
 my vision is 367 degrees

I apologize to the rocks for disturbing them,
 stepping on them, stripping them of mossy

 companions
They scowl and
Then smile

To me?
We pause
On an island of sand
To smoke and rest
For a bit
Imaginary sunburn
Begins to sting
Warmth
Spring at last
Blue smoke rises
From my cigarette
And becomes part
Of a great
Effervescent
Cloud Drama
Then looking
Straight ahead
Toward the rocks



EDGE CITY

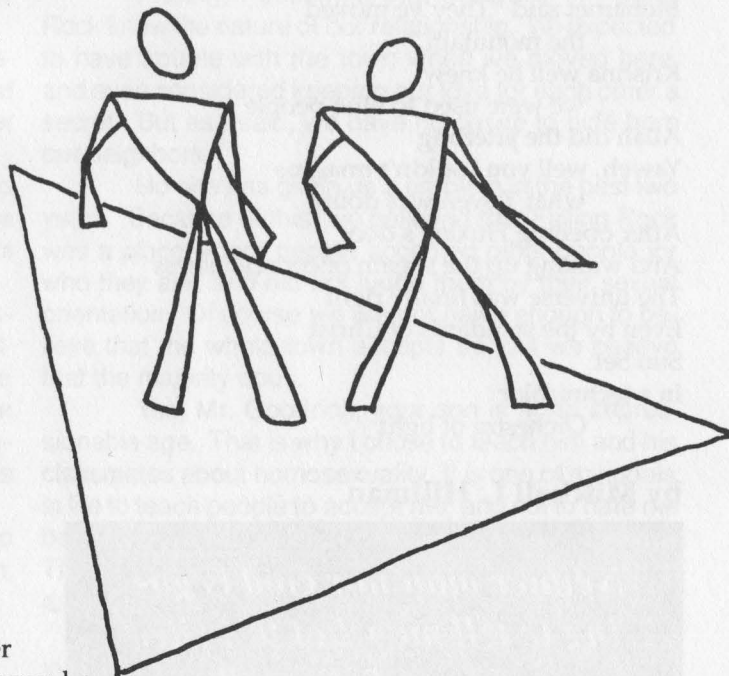
I see the
Faces
I
see
the cliff of
clay staring back
at me like so many elders
displeased; The earth starts an agonizing
wail from its ragged, raped and pillaged cliffs of dirt
and rock; and a blood that seeps between the ancient faces. Or
tears shed for an infinity at the damage that has been done
The same elders death masks on the wall change and
become younger and older weeping and
laughing and screaming in frustration
and fear.
"Don't fear us, you gnarled gallery
We'll fade away long before
you ever will, besides
we're just a couple
of Zen lunatics
Actually
he is a
Zen
—
c
at
hol
ic"

Then all is forgiven for us, at least
and the journey resumes
to the enormous wade upcreek
with painted rocks like submerged
Eskimo heads
Hey! the waters warm over
Here.

right here
I avoid walking through
a school of fish
and school's not in session
I saw you and you weren't
even

there. . .
The river runs red
Now, my legs are
Submerged in water
From a thousand wars
something you only see in
movies about massacres
on the brave rivers edge

Suddenly there is a dog
On the shore barking madly
An extra from *Deliverance*
says softly in a loud manner
"Don't let him near you he
has rabies!"
Did I hear that right?
I spy the highway



("Heaven. . ." continued from page 7)

The water gets cold
so we slink to sticky tarmac
So vividly black it hurts
My eyes
Sunburn back
My mind twists
Then we are
On the sparkling
Flint rock frenzy
Of the northward
Bound Tioga
We find two
Friends
sitting
waiting
For old faithful
The earth rumbles
Ground below me
vibrates like a
rusty machine
then
the explosion
Old faithful
burst
to the delight of all
Giddy on a spring day
Nothing is real
God smiled and laughed
Buddha beamed
with pleasure
Mohamet said "They've moved
the mountain."
Krishna well he knew
we were used to blue people
Allah did the jitterbug
Yaweh, well you couldn't imagine
what Yaweh was doing
After opening Huxley's door
And walking up the stream of consciousness
The universe was finally right
Even by the standards of Christ
Sun Set
In a technicolor
Orchestra of light

by Mitchell L. Hillman

Neither man nor God is going to tell me what to write.
--James T. Farrell

give me soul

baby i need soul.

purple sounds, deep strings and horn,
gently clashing beats on brooklyn streets
stitched black and white,
brothers and sisters

give me soul.

africa and israel
groove till dawn under false moons
of streetlight rays in olde crown heights.

give me soul.

car hits boy, blade pierces man,
stitches pulled, torn.
red sea dammed
by nightstick blue.

we need soul.

by T. J. Caulfield

In my Cabin down the road

I love God.
God is good to me.
I need God.
I want St. Peter.
I am into Christianity.
I need friends.
I have none.
Please, can you be my friend?
I won't give up.
It's hard to find, a girl,
With no money.
So, I have to live. . . on
Knowledge. I am a friend,
Paper in the wind
Everything changed
From slow to fast
Now I'm lost, don't
Hurt me. When I dream
I see it.

I day dream and
I do it.
I am a man don't push
Me.
Trying to keep
It humorous.

by Joseph Daniel Rumsey

The Best Little Town

by Clint D. Shulenski

To the Editor:

I would first like to congratulate you on a wonderful newspaper. The Falling Rock Press is the absolute best paper in the area. I have enjoyed your paper for 43 years now, and not once in those 43 years have I missed a single issue.

I left Falling Rock when I was 16, and I did not return until I was 26. I didn't appreciate Falling Rock when I left, but when I returned after ten years, I was mature enough to recognize the virtues of my home town.

Falling Rock is home to many people who care about the entire town. Our youth are growing up in a clean, sober environment, whose only wish is to see them succeed and help them grow. The people of Falling Rock are open minded, moral, and traditional. We are Christians who try to live according to Christ's teachings.

Falling Rock is the best little town in the world!

Nancy J. Warren
Falling Rock, Pa.

To the Editor:

I am writing this article to let my fellow neighbors know that we have a disease in this town. That disease is homosexuality.

My son told me this morning that his new Social Science teacher at the middle school announced to his class that she is a lesbian. She presented her disgusting lifestyle as an "alternative lifestyle."

I will not mention her name here, but I would like her to know that I, and I am sure I can speak for the parents of the rest of the students in her class, do not appreciate her announcing her "lifestyle" to my child.

Miss, I consider your lifestyle to be utterly sickening, revolting and not in tune with the Christian values of this community. You had no right to announce your perverted lifestyle in front of my child, or any other child. Children of my son's age are very impressionable, and I will not condone someone trying to twist his mind with filth.

I am going to do everything in my power to make sure that you do not remain a teacher in this town.

Samuel M. Goodrich
Falling Rock, Pa.

Dear Diary,

I haven't had my period for two months now. I think I'm pregnant. I wrote a letter to Jason three weeks

ago, but he hasn't replied yet. Oh, please Lord, I'll do anything if I weren't pregnant. Please God, my dad would kill me. Dad always says you look after people who pray to you. Well please God, I know I sinned, but I love Jason, and he asked me to marry him. I know that doesn't make it right, but I swear Lord, I'll never sin again. In Jesus name I pray—Amen.

Cindy Warren December 5, 1993

To the Editor:

I would like to reply to last week's letter by Mr. Goodrich. I admit that I did tell the children in my classes that I am a Lesbian. I have been teaching at Falling Rock Middle School for three years now. In the past two of those three years, I have been living with Lynn Robinson.

Lynn and I have never tried to make our relationship a secret. We are not ashamed to be in love, and we have no desire to hide our affection for each other. On any given day, the two of us can be seen walking our dog, Morris, and holding hands while doing so. We are often seen throughout the town together; not once have we tried to hide the fact that we are lesbians.

Frankly, I assumed that everyone in Falling Rock knew the nature of our relationship. We expected to have trouble with the town when we moved here, and even considered keeping our love for each other a secret. But as I said, we have no desire to hide from our neighbors.

No one has given us a problem in the past two years. Because of this, we believed that Falling Rock was a place where people accepted other people for who they are, and did not judge them by their sexual orientation. Of course we are not naive enough to believe that the whole town accepts us, but we believe that the majority does.

Yes, Mr. Goodrich, your son is at an impressionable age. That is why I chose to teach him and his classmates about homosexuality. It is one of my goals in life to teach people to accept me, and not to hate me because I am in love with someone of the same sex. There is enough hatred in this world, and if I can do anything to weaken that hatred, I will.

I still have faith that the majority of the people in Falling Rock are open minded and accepting.

Sandra H. Haversham
Falling Rock, Pa.

("The Best Little Town. . ." cont'd from page 10)

Dear Santa,

I dont want any gifs this year. I want a job for dad. Hes ben drinkin alot latly and he beats mom when he gits home. Mom says its just cause hes nervis about not havin a job so please git dad a job for christmas.

Seth Graham

ps Ive ben good.

To the Editor:

I agree with Sam Goodrich. My wife and I also did not appreciate Miss Haversham announcing her sexual choices to our daughter.

We do not wish to have this lifestyle a part of our lives. What you do in your bedroom is your business, but keep it that way.

Things that are done in secret are best left that way.

Wilford Scotts

Falling Rock, Pa.

Dear Cindy,

I'm writing to tell you that I've met someone else. She's a girl that lives off base, and I think I'm in love. I didn't mean to hurt you and I'm sorry

Best Wishes,

Jason

p.s. There's an abortion clinic in Muncy. If you want me to, I'll send money.

Dear Sandy and Lynn,

We want you to know that the people of the Falling Rock First Baptist Church are praying for you. We are to love the sinner, but hate the sin.

Remember what the Bible says: "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is an abomination," Leviticus 18:22.

"If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination, they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them," Leviticus 20:13.

We want you to know that you are invited to come and pray with us. In the meantime, we shall be praying for you. Services are every Sunday at 11:00 a.m., and every Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. We hope to have you with us soon.

May you live in the light of God,
The Congregation of the Falling Rock
First Baptist Church

Dear Miss Haversham,

I'm a student at the high school. I think I'm gay. I've thought that I might be for about three years now. I can't talk to anyone about it. I often read the personals in the bigger city newspapers and dream about meeting and maybe loving another GWM. I wish I could talk to you. I wanted you to know that I think you're really brave.

With Respect,
"Jimmy"

To the Editor:

I wish to address Miss Haversham. I want you to know that the majority of the people in this town do not condone homosexuality, as you seem to think we do.

The people of Falling Rock are good Christian people who live moral lives based upon the teachings of the Bible. What you and your "lover" are doing is disgusting and an affront to the Christian values of our community.

You have no right to decide what our children should and should not accept. That is the right of the parents.

Sandra Hicks

Falling Rock, Pa.

Personals

GWF wishes to speak to "Jimmy." Will be confidential and understanding. Please call me.

Dear Lesbian Whores,

I want you to understand that if you ever try to twist the minds of my children again, you will be sorry. The numbers add up, bitch. Twenty-seven letters to the Editor, and all of them saying the same thing. We don't want you here. Understand that no one loves you here. Not even God. You will burn in Hell.

(unsigned letter left under Haversham's door)

To the Editor:

I'm writing to say that I'm tired of reading so many negative letters about the lesbian couple. If they are happy, why can't people leave them alone?

I believe that Ms. Haversham had the right to educate our children about homosexuality. It is a fact of life that must be faced, and I agree with Ms. Haversham. There is too much hatred in this world.

The only way to defeat hatred is through education.

James Masters
Falling Rock, Pa.

Dear Jason,

Please don't do this to me! You said you loved me! Please, please, please call me! I can't get an abortion, my dad would kill me!

Please call me!
Cindy

Dear Congressmen Hattfield,

You told me in response to my first letter that I can't have a person removed from a public office based on her sexual preference. Don't I have the right to decide who is teaching my child? Are there any other avenues I can take to get her removed?

Sincerely,
Samuel M. Goodrich
Falling Rock, Pa.

I hate you Santa!

Christmas was 3 weeks ago and my dad still doesn't have a job. If he beats mom again it's your fault.

Seth

Dear Sandra and Lynn,

I just wanted to thank you guys again for talking to me. I think I'm starting to understand myself better. I just hope that when I go to college that I'll meet someone perfect for me, just like the two of you did.

Love,
Mike
p.s. write soon.

To Whom it May Concern,

I am giving up on this world because no one loves me, not even God. I'm sorry if I've hurt anyone, but it's hard not to in this town. It just seems like there are so many people here that want to hurt you. I know that suicide is a sin, but I think I'll find more love in Hell than in Falling Rock.

Good-bye Forever,

Cindy Warren

A Journey of One

I was so impressed with you:
Cute friend of my big brother,
Wanted me to,

"wear your ring,"

Wanted to,

"make it official..."

I was your,

"girl."

You held me, fed me,

Kept me sane and warm,

Became my greatest fear in
one still summer night.

The soft soil of the riverbank

Soaked up my screams, my thoughts,
My soul.

The steady gurgle of the Susquehanna couldn't
Take me away.

So now you ask forgiveness
(Or to apologize at the very least)
Offering some feeble excuse about
How young we were.

You were the age I am now—

You weren't so young.

You have no idea of the

Pain I carry in the memory;

The scars I bear on my thigh,

My breast, my heart;

The fear I have of your phone calls,
of bumping into you,

of feeling your hand on my shoulder,
a reminder that you're still there.

And since I can't shake that fear,

Should I pass it back to you?

Because I'm not quite sure what it is that

You carry with you:

Pain? Fear?

Do you even remember my screams?

As if to justify your cause,

I remind myself that you tried to

Quit smoking for me.

You cough, and I don't even

Bother asking if you ever did.

I give in and light up one of my own,

Choking down the memory of our plans to

Bike across the States together,

You and me.

Then you ask to get together again,

Sometime...

If it wouldn't make me appear insane,

I'd tell you that you're just about,

"Unforgettable,"

But since I no longer let other people

Sing my songs for me,

I just laugh.

If it eases your mind,

Just pass by and pretend that it

Never happened,

But I simply cannot

Ease your mind for you.

by Kate Griffith

The Dancing

by Kate Serra

I reach down to pick it up—such an effort in muscles which feel like they're tearing off my bones. My feet burn from the too tight boots and sucking sands. What an odd little stone—opaque obsidian. Polished smooth by streams of sand, it reflects my purplish taut face in kaleidoscopic fragments. I slip it into a loose pocket where it bumps against my outer thigh in reassurance that I am not alone. I've been out here so long. Wives tales and old Bugs Bunny cartoons have led me to expect mirages over each monolithic dune. But every time I top the summit only a new ocean floor of sand awaits me.

I gave up fear an hour ago; resignation fled long before. Determination is nowhere to be found—I don't know what's keeping my legs moving. Thirst.

A sudden shift in the wind blankets me temporarily—I choke on the grains. Please God, God-dess, Allah, who or whatsoever will listen, grant me a miracle now. Even a mirage would help. At least I'd know my brain was still functioning. So often my luck runs on incredible marathons—unfortunately this is not one of those times.

I thought all airplanes were supposed to go down in heavy winds over inscrutable waters, not in total calm over a blank white dune. To think, Grandma was right when she used to whisper such Catholic horror stories into my young ear; I wonder if she'd seen this coming somehow or another. "Nunca viajes en avion o en barco," she'd mumble after taking note of a particularly gruesome accident. Right as always...I never did try to travel by water, though I've flown on many flights around the world and back. I wish she could tell me what

to do now. Of all the ultimate ironies, trying to get to her funeral in Arizona I finally live out her nightmares—I suppose you're not my guardian angel, Abuela.

I should've known by the way this all started—Mother called at midnight sharp. The next morning by 4:30 am I was on my way to Harrisburg International, that's when everything should've clicked. I had to go through an incredible hassle to get a ticket. I can't believe that to go to Arizona from Harrisburg I had to go by way of New York City. Then, of course, there's the airport itself—I hate crowds...the 70's hairstyled jerk at the baggage counter...the dogged Hare Krishna...the window seat with a garrulous first time flyer between me and the aisle...Though I should thank the man after all. If I hadn't fled to the bathroom to get away from his nervous chattering, I'd be six feet under trapped next to him for eternity now.

Yeah...that pretty much brings it all home. I'm out here—no one else is—no one live. I've been going in circles for the past few hours—keep ending up on the wind-swept cliff that's beginning to cover the tail end of the plane.

I can't go back there again. I know it'd be my best bet to stay with the wreck, but I..., I can't. One night is all I can take sleeping in a graveyard. I can just imagine angry souls chasing after me because I survived when they didn't. No, I'll take my chances and walk, well, stumble really. But hey, if they find me, when they find me, I'll have the darkest tan I've ever had in my life...if the sand hasn't flayed the skin from my bones by then. So I'll keep walking, and hope Abuela's still close enough to the Earth to guide my steps.

I broke the circle. Haven't seen the wreck—tail end sticking up out of the sands—since the sun began moving toward the horizon. But I'm still fairly close; I can feel it. Shouldn't there've been a search team by now? It's been at least, I don't know, a day and a half maybe? I'm so dry. The heat and wind makes me need to pee, but I'm afraid to lose more fluid. Is it better to try and hold it in, or let it out? I never did go on the Girl Scouts camping trip to get my wilderness badge; Papa and Grandma agreed that I shouldn't miss my Sunday school class. I could never keep St. Anthony and St. Thomas straight. My strongly Roman Catholic family was ashamed that we all twisted the nice neat English names into more familiar sounding Spanish ones. The nuns always made me kneel on my palms—'no leaning on anything'—when I mocked them by not knowing the proper names. Whichever's the traveler's saint—Cristobal is it?—be with me now.

Night's coming on fast. I've gotta find somewhere to stop, just for a moment. Gotta remember not to sleep or I'll wake up buried alive. But where else is there? So much wind. I never thought deserts had wind; I never knew I could freeze to death in one.

I can't remember how long I've been out here. Was it just yesterday that I kicked out the tiny bathroom window and squeezed out of the plane? I've got to get somethin' to keep track a the time. Maybe this makes two? No, three actually—'cause the second day I found a brush area with some cacti. Too syrupy to satisfy the water craving, but definitely better than nothing. That means I'm approaching a land area rather than open desert, or so

Adventurer on the Discovery Channel told me. Not long now, if that lisp, kinky-haired, couldn't-possibly-be-a-real-life-archaeologist was actually right.

I'll never be shy about speaking out loud to myself in public after this—I've found a healthy respect for that way of thinking things through. My mind's so confused anymore, it doesn't make sense out of anything I need to do. I think I slept on the dunes last night. I don't have the foam pillow anymore I stole gently from beneath a ripe, charred, child's hand. I dreamt it was smothering me—woke up running. Can't remember right.

Taken to scraping my boots with the stone to keep track of the days—it lost its luster since I've been using it to do that. Sometimes I find myself just stumbling into the sand, scrabbling at its surface, sure that I'd smelt water below me.

The Adventurer archeoli-archangel-arch-e-ol-o-gist was wrong.

The scrapes on my boot are four now; think. Can't feel; fingers hurt to breathe.

The wind is less dry anymore. I try to drink it, it seems so wet—end up with a mouthful of sand. I think I missed yesterday. Who knows where it went.

Thought I'd try'n work on my mind for a bit, list the things not same with cactussss an differ shades of sky. Can't take anymore cactus juice—makin me sick. Wa-

ter, water, water, un bebe de agua por favor, no tenemos ninguno senora...

Can't see. Skin of my face feels coarse, not smooth. Of course, can't feel hands tampoco. Abuela, you said I'd dance, like you.



Can't you see Grandmother? I'm dancing here. Can't you see? You promised to help me get there—the shiny stage. Help me get there...there get me help..me there help get...there help get me...

Sick of waiting...can't wait, no more, no more...go back. Gotta go back—finish the circle—be where I shd've been 'riginally.

Thr'z the baby—the littlest one—mouth an O-gape of maggots writhing. So, I take her tiny head—so gently—turn the doll-monster face to the sand, and shake out the maggots. Get a good solid grip on the little arms and swing her round 'n round. Circling wider and wider—my hands slip and the doll's arm falls off...toss her toward the exit hole I've dug...We can all sit down there an' wait for help to come. But no one's listening. Get up! I've found us shelter...turn back into the sands. The next partner—a slight woman,

blackened eyes and missing a leg and arm—grips me. We prance toward the shelter...step one-two-three, step one-two-three... Viste Abuela! I'm here now—can't you see? Another audition begins—my poor seat partner—too heavy...you'll

have ta get out a the lifeboat sir, no room for you here...

Finally...I got most of 'em in — s o m e women an' children cd fit...Now to make sure we'll be safe from the night winds—I drag a piece of seat to the hole—carefully fit myself in, and pull the pillow slowly over us...safe n o w . . . c a n breathe...what is water, hun-

ger? I've no need...no need! Hear! Are you even listening?

"It's been so long...why haven't we heard anything?" the woman pleaded, routinely fingering her rosaries—'one, Hail Mary, full of grace...' she whispers below the conversation.

"They should've told us by now..." she mumbles—'five, Hail Mary, full of grace...'

"Stop it Madre-ita."

"You need to pray! Times like these—you need to pray...Why don't you? You so uncaring of your sister?"

"It's only been a week...only a week—she couldn't possibly've survived that crash...please God, let her not've survived that—"

"And after all this—all this! She just got better—why now?" 'Fifteen, Hail Mary, full of grace...'

'I don't know, I don't know...'

Journeys

by Darren Penoyer

There is an idea that practically every American child grows up with. In fact, this idea has become synonymous with the fairy tale phrase "happily ever after." As it applied to me as a young boy, the idea went something like this: I would grow up, get a good job, settle down, marry the girl of my dreams, have 2.3 children, and live "happily ever after!" But no one told me what would happen if there was no girl of my dreams, but instead a man of my dreams.

For many years, I played the game that society would have me play. I acted straight. I flirted with women, dated women, and had sex with women. I even thought about marrying a woman, all in hopes that my desires for men would go away. I thought that perhaps I could cure myself of this awful illness. Unfortunately, this act I put on became a full time job—a job that made me more miserable than anything else in the world. It's no wonder I was depressed for so many years.

Don't get me wrong, I am the one who made the ultimate decision to comply with childhood's biggest fairy tale. But I was told by my parents, siblings, friends, and the world around me that it was supposed to be easier than this.

I have recently read the novel Stone Butch Blues by Leslie Feinburg. It is the story of a young lesbian's struggle with the world around her. Toward the end of the book, a conversation between two lesbians and a gay man takes place. The more I've thought about this dialogue, the more it has struck me as very significant. One of the women asks the man how his "journey" was, to which he replies, "It's not what I thought it was gonna be, but it's made me into somebody I can live with." I think it's easy to see that the "journey" they are talking about is life. As I have already expressed, I can completely relate to the asser-

tion that, "It's not what I thought it was gonna be." Every homosexual in America has been told what their journey should entail and what it should not. The biggest problem with a gay travel itinerary is that one of the points of interest is having a partner of the same sex. Unfortunately, the travel guide we call society doesn't approve of the road we wish to take to get to our destination. Ultimately, we can either let society's norms guide us, or take the road less traveled.

After many years, I have finally gone off the beaten path—I have decided to give in to my natural desires. I have admitted that I am a gay male. As a teenager, I never considered this an option, but here I am at 28 looking for Mr. Right. It's kind of odd—I'm finally starting to enjoy life after years of seriously wondering whether I would ever be happy. I was told it could never be this way.

Ironically, the fight to accept what I have been handed has made me stronger. Overcoming the hate inside me has been one of the hardest battles I have ever had to fight. But I've done it—I can now look in the mirror and not taunt myself. I can actually live with myself and look to the future with optimism. There are still many hurdles to overcome, but I think I've tackled the biggest.

I don't think my story is much different than other homosexuals' stories that have taken the journey and survived to tell about it. Unfortunately, there are many people who never make the trip or get lost along the way. Many get caught in society's dead ends. It's sad—self-fulfillment is one of the ultimate human rights, yet it remains a straight right. Until this changes, gays and lesbians will walk the path less taken and risk their lives along the way—both physically and spiritually.

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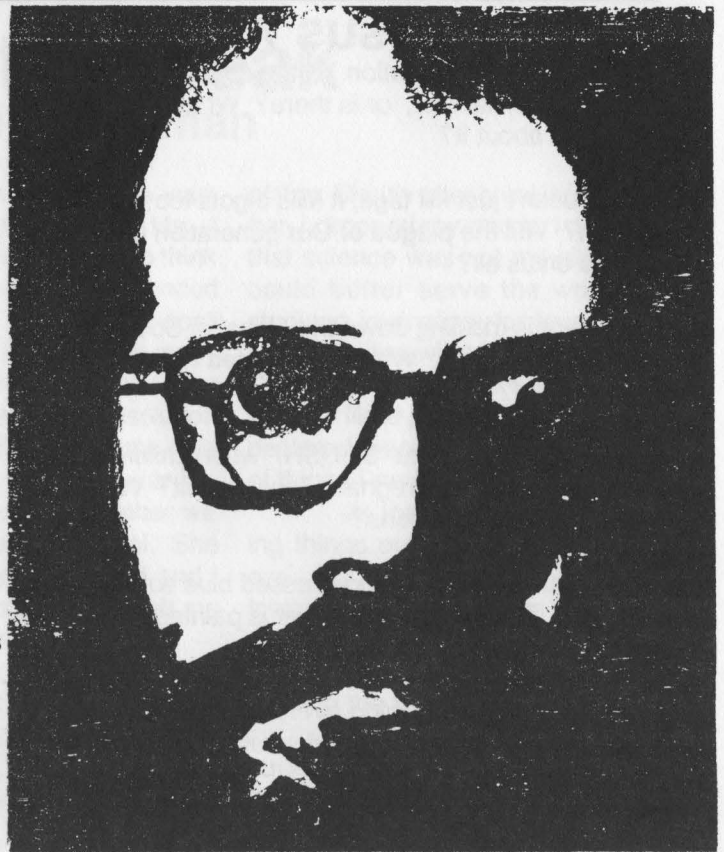
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What Allen didn't say

I don't want to see the best minds of my generation.
They know how to master everything that I can't.
They know how to stop feeling when they call on God
for months on end and He, She, It doesn't
answer,
when they are fucked and beaten by their fathers
while their mothers turn a blind eye,
when their brothers or sisters have perfect children
out of wedlock who are called bastards until
those brothers and sisters do what is right
and marry people they can't stand looking at,
when someone proves that they CAN'T because they
are a boy or a girl, black, white, skinny, fat,
Christian, Atheist, or somewhere in between,
when they fuck anybody because all they want is
love but in the end all they get is fucked,
when they walk down Fifth Avenue to buy Godiva
chocolate for \$24 per lb. and see men across
the street scouring garbage cans searching
for whatever they can find to eat,
when they see their brothers try to kill themselves 3
times by the age of 9,
when they demand that their girlfriends have abor-
tions because they want a little sex but not
any evidence that they get it,
when their parents insist on a better life for them only
to give them a jealous kick in the teeth when
they find it,
when the only person who makes them feel makes
them feel like a pile of shit then leaves.
when they have seen time and time again.
I don't want to see those minds.

But I have seen the best minds of my generation.
They've engineered acts that I never imagined
possible.
They are the ones who have led the wandering flock
to the Promised Land through the fires of
Waco,
who have scraped away their own daughters genitals
with broken Coke bottles and rusty razor
blades in the name of cultural preservation,
who have feasted on the flesh of the victims lured to
their basements-turned-torture chambers,
who have insisted that the Challenger fly through
poor conditions while millions of school
children watched their fantasies and their
heroes go up in smoke,
who have instituted the Holocaust and then claimed
that it never happened,
who have burned *Huckleberry Finn*,
who have turned their backs and refused to comfort
their lonely children, parents, and lovers
dying of AIDS,



who have been shown time and time again and still
refuse to see.

I didn't want to see those minds.

And I have been one of the best minds of my
generation.

I have committed evils that shame me to the core.
Others applauded while I broke all the rules and spit
in the face of the same God whom I prayed
to for miracles,
while I denounced faggots and dykes but secretly
wondered if I was one,
while I changed and praised courageous gays and
lesbians but still wondered in secret,
while the science of the academy embraced me so
tightly that the humanity gushed out of my
ears and trickled across the
floor,
while I continued to love the people who hurt me and
continued to hate myself,
while I spent my time building homes for the poor and
also eating surf & turf,
while I preached equality by making men inferior,
while I wrote about black women but never spoke to
them,
while I was shown time and time again and always
refused to see.
I don't want to be that mind.

by Tricia L. Slusser

Jesus X

We're all Xers, Generation X, the cold war's over, no more Atomic Harvest, or is there? What are we gonna do about it?

AIDS doesn't just kill fags, it kills bigots too, is a cure in sight? Will the plague of Our generation leave lesions on us all?

The future is trickling down the Urinal of Society's Rat infested shit house. What constipated Republican will flush us next?

High-browed Moralists "SHUSH!" when children say "sex?" Why is little pregnant Janey a slut? Who answers these questions?

Conservative men wearing pressed blue suits cry "Pro-life!" The rusty coat hanger is painted red. Who's to blame?

The Boomers are chewing everything up like locusts. Like dogs, we jump to snap at what they spit out for us. What's left?

We can't ask questions like "Where will I be ten years from now?"

We ask questions like "Where will I be next week?"

Don't drink, don't smoke, don't do drugs, don't have sex. Just say No. What's left to say Yes to?

We smoke too much, drink too much, want to fuck everyone because we've been fucked, but who is safe anymore?

We work hard without the promise of a white picket fence or happy children in the back yard. So why do we feel like slackers?

Our parents told Carter to shut up because he dared to tell the truth. Americans are lazy pigs. What was wrong with truth?

Reagan won our hopes, flashing red, white, and blue promises. He tricked us into trickling. Why were we blinded by colors?

Ronald closed hungry minds seeking hope in knowledge. One wise man with a vision tried to kill him. Why was he stopped?

George offered 1000 points of light. He never told us the 1000 points were dead stars. Were we blind?

Government has failed us, corporations don't want us,

the locusts even ate god. So who do we turn to?

Who do we blame? Is anyone to blame? Who pays? Who do we kill? "You'll think of something" we're told.

We've got to think of something.

We've got to find something in this shit house of nothing, nothing, nothing, nothingness.

Well I've thought of something.

God is dead, we need a new Christ.

I raise my hand and say "I!"

I accept my crown of thorns.

Give me guns.

give me your guns and bullets.

Show me who's to blame.

Show me who to kill.

Point the way. I'll bring all my brothers and sisters:
white, black, jew,
native american, asian,
gay, lesbian, straight, bisexual,
druggies, drunks, homeless,
thin men covered with purple lesions,
girls with bloody coat hangers dangling between their legs.

I'll bring them all.

Not hundreds, not thousands, not millions, not billions,
but a hundred million billions.

We will take the guns you offer,
and by God, by Christ, by Satan,
by Allah, by Buddha, by the Goddess,
we will use them to defend our lives.

Point the way and we will pull the trigger,
but don't try to fool us.

We know that our enemy does not live
east of a forgotten nomansland;
in some backwards country lacking democracy,
backwards and guilty of contrived evil.
The menace is within our own boundaries.

We will put our children to bed
and whisper "Revolution" as they sleep.
Without revolution there will be a gray future.
A world of mothers and fathers feeding
green poison to their children.
Better to see your children die
then to let them live in a dead world.

Yes, we are ready and our aim is true.

You point the way, and we will point the guns

by Clint D. Shulenski

The Winter Break

By Mitchell L. Hillman

It had been five days since I had slept and nearly that long since I ate. The only time I had eaten was when Ernie up the hall force fed me Rice Krispie bricks and chocolate chip cookies that one of his girlfriends had sent him. Other than that: no sleep, no food, but a lot of caffeine. It wasn't that I didn't want to sleep either. I couldn't, no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't sleep.

My room was just above freezing. I kept myself warm late at night by pouring out a pool of rubbing alcohol on the floor and lighting it. John, my roommate, had already left for winter break and was not witness to this or my denial of basic needs. He was gone, so I was free to smoke in the room. I was up to a pack a day. It was finals week of my freshman year in college. I smoked, I gargled with coffee, and I looked like a corpse.

It was the morning of my final final. It was an Intro. to Psych course that would be as challenging as breathing. I remember as I walked to class the hallucinations began. Perhaps they were delusions. It didn't much matter... I was losing my mind. I felt so alive I could hardly stand myself. The crisp morning air slapped me in the face, the smell of winter was all around. I staggered to the cafeteria to drink more coffee before the exam.

As I got closer to the exam, poetry and music coursed through every particle of my body. I was humming all over. I looked like hell. Tousled hair, hollow cheeks, and bags under my eyes that could pass for luggage. I stood outside in the December air smoking a cigarette waiting until the last possible moment to go in. It was then that my ex-girlfriend walked by. She barely acknowledged my presence save for raising her eyebrows.

It was her. Rita. She was, at that point, the love of my life. I had yet to get over her, and to think that I was the one who had ended the relationship. Some things don't make sense no matter how many times you play them over and over again in your head. The dissolution of our love was like that for me. We had been going out for a year before coming to college together, we lasted three weeks at school. She had a new steady boyfriend and I had meaningless flings that left me feeling worse than before.

Rita and I had seen one another over fall break. Just once though and it was a conversation not unlike a pit trap. We tried so hard to catch each other in suspected lies and admissions. Other than that we didn't socialize much. I think that was a good thing because whenever I did talk to her it only caused me pain.

I doused my smoke and caught up to her. I said I would like to talk to her after class. The exam became a jumble of dancing dots that made no clear sense to me. I got through with it, shortly after Rita did. When I approached her in the hallway her boyfriend turned the corner.

"Collin, was there something you wanted to say to me?" She asked this so innocently, it was then that her lover put his arms around her and stared at my like an idiot.

"N o . . . N o t h i n g , nevermind...just nevermind..." I walked off frustrated, confused, hating myself for destroying the happiness I had once. I wanted to tell her that I wanted to see her during winter break. I couldn't though, I buckled, I hated myself even more.

When I first arrived at the college I was a biology major that loved science, loved life, and loved a girl named Rita. Now I had none

of that. Shortly after breaking up with her, I dropped my major. I decided that science was not my gig and I could better serve the world by studying journalism for four years. I had no idea what I really wanted. Once I did, but that security was gone. I liked journalism but I never declared it as a major. I liked a lot of things I never declared.

At that point I began seeing things out of the corner of my eye. Paranoia spread through me. It was a few hours before my father picked me up. For those hours I sat in my room bundled in blankets, burning the last of the alcohol. As I sat there the hallucinations became stronger and stronger. Great big things crawling all over me. Insects of every shape and size, all maggoty as they swarmed within my mind. My hair was itching. The walls were breathing. I swore they were trying to speak to me. But I couldn't understand what it was they were trying to say.

My father picked me up and as we loaded the car he noted my emaciated look. He noticed the deathly figure I cut. We talked little on the trip home, commenting here and there about the last few weeks of school. We would talk, but nothing was said. I wanted to tell him how I hated it, how it was the most miserable time of my life, how I couldn't care if Armageddon came the next day. I wanted to die. I had never felt that way before with such ferocity. All I did say was how nice the snow looked covering the land. Burying everything. A winter time burial for the country side.

My mother had prepared a gigantic meal for my homecoming. It was bean soup and a large pork roast, served with mash potatoes and gravy. I ate like I had never seen food. It had been five days. The conversation at dinner was trite,

("Winter Break" cont'd from p.17)

and Mother noticed my pale look too. I felt so detached and uneasy in my own home. At least it was warm.

After dinner I stifled all attempts to sit around and discuss the past semester. I went to the bathroom and threw up. I had shocked my system and overloaded it with food. I tossed my luggage into my room, got into bed and fell asleep. I wouldn't leave my bed for two weeks. The doctor said it was exhaustion and I was lucky I didn't have mono. Thomas Wolfe was right though, you can't go home again.

* * * * *

After the two weeks of bed rest and boredom I made a phone call. In the previous days I had been having fever hallucinations and nightmares. My thoughts were racing, obsessively so, toward Rita. Her image haunted me, it held me captive, and I had to do something about it. I picked up the phone. I shouldn't have called. I did it, and she answered. It was awkward, awful, distant...

"I was wondering if I could see you over break at all?..."

"Why? Colin..."

"I don't know, it's just that I'd really like to see you and..."

Rita finally agreed to come over. She said that she would come over in two hours. I sat like a child awaiting a present, eager with anticipation. I was wearing a necklace that Rita had made for me and was fidgeting with it. As I stared out the window looking for her car, I wondered where she was and why it had been more than two hours. The necklace snapped and beads scattered across the floor. I knew she was not coming over. I knew she didn't want to see me.

A week later she made up some excuse about why she didn't come over and why she didn't call. We eventually did see each other. I picked her up, and we went to see a movie that held my interest for a

few moments, but it was her. The screen could have been blank. The screen was blank.

We ate dinner at a dive near the theater; well, actually, she ate and I just watched her. She was different. Distant and cool. I still saw a glimmer of what was once there. I wished I hadn't seen it at all, I wished the screen was blank.

The fraction of what I saw gave hope, a false hope perhaps. My obsession was driven further, my thoughts were chaotic and blind. There was nothing there really, it was illusion. Everybody kills the thing that they love. Now I was attempting to resurrect what I had destroyed. Toward the end of our relationship we were no longer individuals. We had become each other. She was no longer the person I once loved so much. She was instead, my reflection. Rita had been consumed by me. I had killed the thing that I loved, I had changed her so much that she was no longer there. I didn't realize that sitting there, watching her eat her dinner.

This continued to bother me through the Christmas holiday. My thoughts were consumed by her, she was all I wanted and all I knew. Everything else was so mechanical. I was just going through the motions while my soul was elsewhere.

* * * * *

On New Year's Eve I used the phone again. I called Rita and I also called my friend Heather. Rita said that I could see her in the late afternoon. Heather wanted to see me earlier. It had been her first semester at college also. We remarked how things change so suddenly, and then nothing is the same. I thought of how jealous Rita once was of my friendship with Heather, how Rita and I had practically broken up because I was so close to Heather, how there were rumors that I was cheating on Rita with Heather, how Heather began to dislike Rita for all the shit she was putting me through, and how ironic that I would be talking with Rita in moments. My thoughts were talking to her now

without my seeing or hearing her. Heather diverted my attention at times but I was thinking what I would be saying before I was even seeing Rita.

Rita was in her room burning incense. It reminded me so much of the first time I had been in her room. Warm and moist with a fragrant smoke in the air. Patchouli. I entered with caution. She looked at me and smiled. I think she too remembered the moment that was so distant. We started talking and I was loving her. She didn't know this, but I was loving her. Cat Stevens played on her stereo and it was sad, it was emotional, it pushed me to where I didn't want to be. She was uncomfortable. She felt the awkwardness of every step and finally she knew. She felt the emotion I felt, she felt it and knew. She was scared, and from the casual conversation she broke...

"Why are you doing this Collin..."

"What do you mean why am I doing this, doing what..."

"Collin, I have finally found happiness again. I am finally getting myself back. And now, now you come to me and show your interest, and want to be my friend and... and I don't think we can be friends, I don't think we can be anything... I think... Why Collin? Why?"

"Because I still LOVE YOU! I've never stopped and you never gave me the chance to explain anything, and I never wanted to lose you and don't you understand!!..." I had lost. I had snapped, I had revealed the secret of the trick before performing it. I started shaking and I held back the tears. She stood up, walked behind me, sat down and...

"For Christ's sake whatever you do, don't hold me... don't fucking hold me, whatever you do don't..." she wrapped her arms around me and I burst into tears, I absolutely broke down. The tears flowed from me like a waterfall and she held me all afternoon because there was nothing else she could do. She had found new happiness, and I had lost

all that I had ever known. And I loved her. And it killed me.

I spent New Year's Eve with people I didn't know. People I really didn't care to know. I felt so detached from life. All my emotions had spilled out onto Rita's carpet and now I was hollow. I drank myself into a silent stupor and threw up in the host's yard. I had given Rita everything, I had played my hand and she wasn't bluffing. It was a new year. It was the same year. It was a different gear.

* * * *

Nothing phased me until a few days later. I returned to work for a couple of weeks on a whim. I didn't have to, I didn't need to, but I needed to occupy my time. I worked for Rita's dad. It wasn't the best idea to be there, she had gotten me the job, my thoughts were consumed by her. It was a dock job, manual labor, so I had immense amounts of time to think.

The first night I worked was an eternity. Rita's image haunted me. As I was leaving I put a tape of hers into the cassette deck. I was out of hand; my thoughts, my mind, everything centered on her. Everything was her. There was nothing else. Except for the car that broadsided me as they were going through a red light at 55.

* * * *

My parents blamed me. Perhaps it was me. It didn't matter. I snapped. I lost any touch I once had. It was my winter break. The doctors said it was amazing that I hadn't been injured physically in the accident. The psychological damage it caused, they said, could be helped with therapy. In two weeks time, they said, I could return to the college with supervision and weekly therapy. A nervous breakdown like this, they said, was uncommon in someone so young.

I didn't speak, I couldn't. For the first time in my life I had nothing to say to anyone about anything. Only the therapist got me to say anything and then it was only in writing. I was happy to write, as

thoughts of death trampled their bloody feet through my head. All my thoughts were terse. Everything was delivered to my mind with brevity and then it was gone. I worked, I slept, I ate, and I smoked. It was all I could really do. There was no meaning to anything. I had never realized that mentally I could have such a breaking point. No one could understand. My parents blamed their problems on me. I blamed my problems on me. I was a problem. Problems. And there were thoughts.

... really bad thoughts, swimming around in my mind. They said the therapy would work and I would be okay, in time. I couldn't talk. NO VERBAL COMMUNICATION. I had developed a fear of the telephone. I

did not speak for the rest of break.

I would not speak again until the day I returned to the college. When, by the therapist, I was asked some information.

"What is your name?"

"Collin Thorn..."

"What is your social security number? What is your address? What is your phone number. What is your..." And so it went until finally...

"Collin, what is your major?"

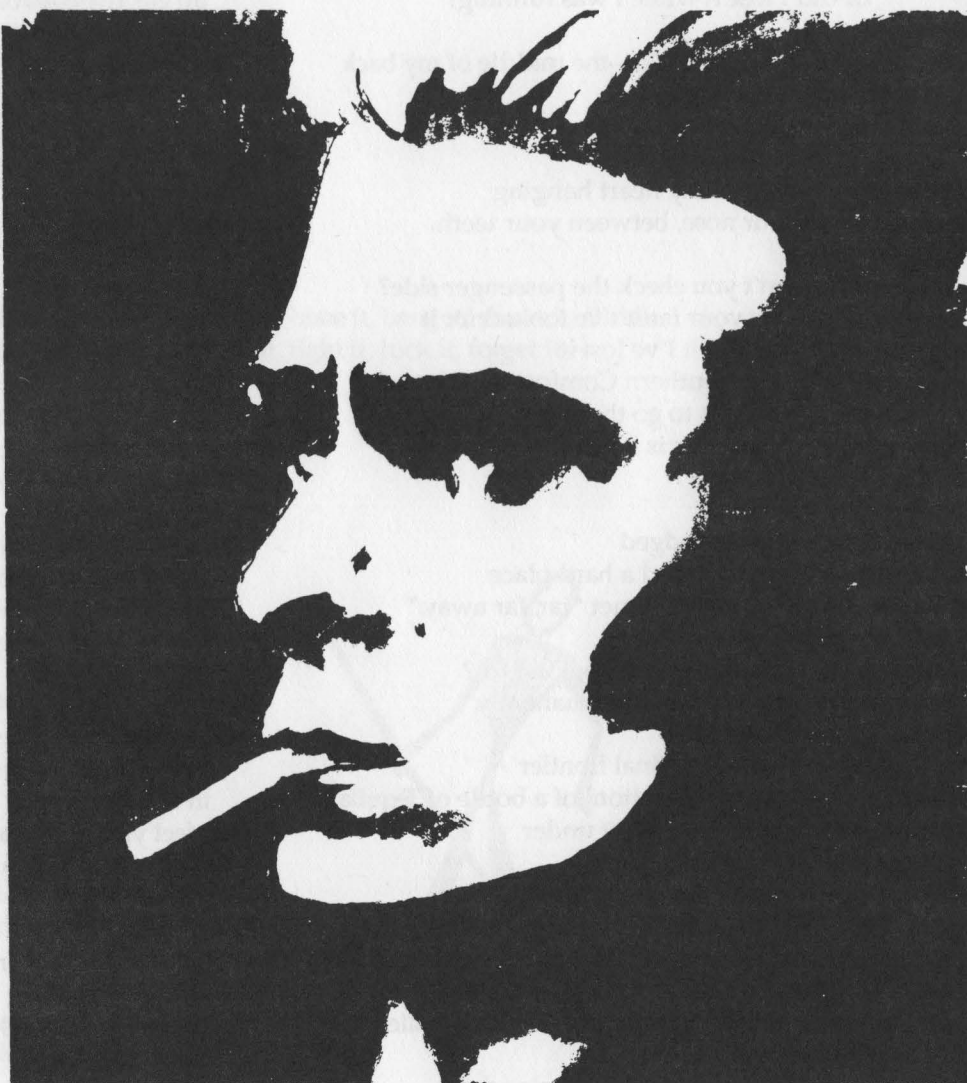
"Undecided..."

"Oh, you mean undecided."

"No, I mean undecided."

"Well, what does that mean?"

"It means I know where I've been..."



I Think Maybe I Lost IT . . .

At the show where you baked
among the blades of crabgrass and hot cement lost
behind the dresser or maybe in the space
between the counter and the refrigerator
You left me sitting
At the bottom of the pool, or in Timbuktu
Jersey, Hell . . .
Maybe at home where I lost it
on the table
beside a bottle of whiskey—or below eye level
In the cushions of the sofa, caught between
my toes or left in my back pocket.
Or maybe you left it in
the Pringles can or the twisted sheets you shared.

Maybe I left it on the nightstand
That line from his neck to his shoulder
In the palm of his hand. I twist you.
Around my little finger
or did I lose it while I was running?

I think I felt it tickle—the middle of my back
where I can't see
the arch of my foot
the back of my knee
The valves of my heart hanging
From your nose, between your teeth.

Why don't you check the passenger side?
I think it's your fault I've looked for it
but it's my fault I've lost it
Next to the Southern Comfort on a Saturday
Night—I want to go there too.
Where the music is loud, scene hectic
sky different.

It seems to be lodged
Between a rock and a hard place
a distant shore, a planet "far, far away."
Only on TV
Could I find what I'm looking for?
or Maybe I've lost it permanently.

I've searched the final frontier
Not found at the bottom of a bottle of Tequila
In the ground—six feet under
She lives there with you.
what was the space in my heart.

Didn't find it in New Haven, Connecticut.
Should have gone to Wooster, Ohio.
Mike's in Vermont, Kevin's in State College.
God is everywhere.
Colorado, New Mexico, England.
"At the bar—the third stool."

by Heather M. Madden

straitjacket polka

ready,
and a one, step over
blue beam with peeling paint,
crumbling concrete rooftop ledge,
or dry-rot window sill,

t
and a two, hold s a y,
e d
cold steel polished barrel's shine,
mirrored grin of dagger's blade,
wrist and temple X the spot,

and a three, inhale,
smokey cocktail plumes,
bleaches and hundred proofs,
pills, pills, down the chute,

back to one, place around neck till blue,
an electric cord or flexible fiber,
if you live, a scar and manyhoursoftherapy
if success. . .

America, I do not wish to dance today
by T. J. Caulfield

to tom:

"i remember"

memories laced with posies—
daisies and brown-eyed susans
pressed in russian classics—
i think of walks in
fields and woods;
the view you drew on my back,
on my flesh—
and i bring you back
to a time and place far
from planes, pains—
palms pressed together
in my mind,
on a walk,
on a million walks—
playing them over and over
in my mind.
i feel your pain each night
and cry out to you,
for you,
and you hold me there—
bring you home in the confusion of
crowded parking lots,
charged emotions—
i run from this
to you.

by Kate Griffith

Mantra Ray

I went to the mountain
To seek my mantra;
Murmuring meditatively
My mantra came to me—
Quick!

Lightning flashing, flaming, frying, crying, crushing, crashing,
smashing, sizzling, stinging, pulsing, pounding, pushing,
bashing, broiling, beaming, beating, heating, hitting, hacking —
Replacing the me that was,
It rolled over and over again
As my mind melts into obscurity—

Divine inspiration danced through me
Divine perspiration washed over me
Divine respiration cleansed within me
Divine inhalation yinned my yang
Divine exhalation yanged my yin
Divine contemplation made things clear
Divine articulation rang my ear
Divine rejuvenation removed my sin
Divine destination loosened my fear;

It came to me from somewhere
From me it came to where some are
It moves in mysterious waves,
And things like this I no longer question
Then, in my mind there is nothing
But me and my mantra
Then it's not even there
It simply is

I don't yell it, wail it, roar it, holler it, howl it, bark it, blare it, bang it, shout it, shriek
it, screech it, say it, speak it, sing it, suck it, scream it, fight it, fuck it, forget it—

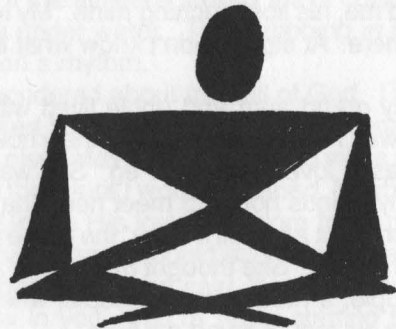
I feel it
A shock from touching an electrical plug
That feels kinda' good
A tingle of toes from sleeping circulation,
Hackles raised rigidly,
Or a shiver and shake
from a brisk breeze—
It vibrates me that way.

And I stared toward the sky
And it looked back at me,
One great big blue eternity—
And everything was alright.
And I'm alright
And it's alright—

I'm on the bus,
In the groove,
Riding the ride,
Sailing the sail,
Dancing the dance,
Sliding the slide

As if I'll never leave
This gentle progression.

by MITCHELL L. HILLMAN



WAITING FOR THE WILL OF GOD

by Constance R. Sullivan

I used to lie awake at night thinking about my wedding kiss. I wore a long white gown and the groom looked like a Ken doll without a face. He never really had a face. I used to lie awake and imagine him leaning toward me, his lips touching mine. My imagination stopped there. At eight I didn't know what it felt like to be kissed.

My grand aunt and uncle lived with us then. Aunt Peg was 78 and I never really knew how old Uncle Charlie was. I loved my Aunt Peg. She was senile. I brought my friends home to meet her. She would pet my brother's foot and call it "Tiny" the name of her long deceased poodle. She thought my brother and I made a nice couple, a hard working couple, when she was not petting his foot. I loved my Aunt.

Uncle Charlie wasn't really as much fun. He still had his wits about him. He looked worriedly at his wife. We pitied him. My Uncle Charlie was something of a saint. Every night after dinner we all knelt down in our places around the table for one decade of the rosary. Uncle Charlie would start the prayer, "Our Father who art in heaven" and when he was about half way done the rest of us would recite the remainder of the prayer as he began the next prayer. It was seamless; there was no pause. It was like a round of the rosary; none of us ever said the whole prayer. We all had our role and those roles were not to be exchanged. The boundaries were clearly established. Rather than memorizing the whole prayer we were to contemplate on the mystery of the rosary, the sorrowful mystery or the joyful mystery.

With Uncle Charlie leading us in prayer, I would concentrate on the blessed Mother. She looked like my mother with long, brown hair pulled back in awkward waves from her face, revealing huge, dark eyes, high cheekbones, a tight and suffering mouth. I would imagine her sorrow while Jesus hung from the cross. I thought her pain was more pure, more intense than the suffering of Christ because she didn't have the comfort of revelation. Jesus knew He was doing the Father's will. Mary must have always wondered. She was just a human after all, and humans wondered about the will of God.

I wondered about the will of God. I knew that I would wait until marriage to have sex with my husband. Sex was sacred and beautiful. Sex was a sacrament meant for Holy Matrimony. I imagined sex at night. I imagined the hands of my husband. I imagined the feel of his chest against my skin. But, I couldn't see his face. I had to trust in God that my husband would come to me and I would recognize him. There was a sliver of doubt, however, that God's will was more difficult. Per-

haps I was called to the sisterhood. If I could not see the face of my husband, perhaps it was because my husband was Christ. This was something I prayed about around the dining room table as Uncle Charlie completed a decade of the rosary.

Aunt Peg died of a gall bladder attack when I was nine. When the call came, I was looking at pictures in a large glossy book called Human Anatomy while the mellow, full sound of my brother Brian's french horn filtered through from the other room. Bare chested women and the honey melody of "Don Juan" had moved my hands over my body, my fingers over my nipples with a small magic. My thighs began to tingle in a way I did not recognize; it was different than the urge to pee and mysteriously pleasurable. In the adjacent room, the phone rang and Brian picked up the receiver. I heard him walk up to the door and rushed to put away the book. He peaked inside and said, "Aunt Peg died. Just imagine, she must have died right while I was playing that piece." Brian turned around, shut the door and went back to practice. I sat alone, stunned. I was convinced that at the moment of Aunt Peg's death I was aroused. I wondered if she had seen me touching myself.

Uncle Charlie started taking medicine after Peg died. Every night before my bed time he would take down the Blackberry Brandy from the highest kitchen shelf and pour himself a shot. He'd look at me and wink, "It's my medicine. Doctor's orders." I tried to spend more time with Uncle Charlie after Aunt Peg died. He looked sad all the time and I felt guilty. God had caught me looking at dirty pictures. I was bad and I had to make it up to God; I had to do something good.

Uncle Charlie started tucking me in every night. I felt a little funny about it since I was nine and thought I was getting old for such treatment. Still, he seemed to want to say good night in a special way and he looked happier. I started making sure I greeted Uncle Charlie when I came in the house and that I said good-bye when I left. I liked being his favorite. My mother smiled at me when she saw this. I thought God probably liked it too since Uncle Charlie was special to Him being a saint and all. My father told me that Uncle Charlie was distantly related to the TV priest who did the mass for shut-ins. This made him really special.

Mom and Dad needed a vacation after Aunt Peg died. They decided to take a cruise to Bermuda. When Mom and Dad went on vacation Uncle Charlie really needed extra attention. If I didn't greet him as soon as I came home he pouted, a small round baby pout that could have been sorrow, but wasn't. I made sure I kissed him good night every night. He would

breathe into my face, "There's my girl." Inside my stomach curled up into a ball. Ice water dribbled over my clenched stomach and I would smile. I would smile to hide the shiver blowing over my skin. I would smile to hide the taste of metal in my mouth and the frightening thought that this fear was a sin. It was a sin to fear Uncle Charlie.

I shut myself in the music room every night to practice my piano. Uncle Charlie listened to me play night after night. He especially enjoyed "Oh, Susannah." One night after practicing, Uncle Charlie looked at me and said, "Come sit by me." His eyes smoldered. His smooth clear face had a shine; he looked so clean. His perfect head of white hair was combed. But he smelled of age. He smelled of folds of flesh hanging over themselves which have gone too long between baths. I felt the ice water trickle past my stomach down to my thighs.

"Sit closer."

Ice froze in my throat. I edged closer fighting the sense of danger in my stomach, arguing against it silently, thinking, "This is Uncle Charlie."

"May I kiss you?"

I nodded yes silently while my heart sped in my chest and my mouth went dry. He leaned toward me, the smell of brandy closing in on me. He kissed my lips hard. His right hand slipped under my shirt and kneaded the area on my chest where my breast would some day be. He kneaded me like a sore muscle. He kneaded me until my breast tingled then hurt. He looked at me frankly while touching me and asked, "Is this alright?" I nodded mutely, my head lifting off my shoulders and floating on the ceiling. I watched his hand crawl over my breast from a distance like I was watching TV. I watched my back grow stiff and straight while a small voice inside said, "Don't move and you won't get hurt. Just do as you're told. Obey." His tongue pushed between my lips and against my teeth like a small strong slug. My teeth remained clenched with a will of their own. They resisted his tongue as if it were a matter of survival. He said, "Relax," and with his free hand pried open my jaw. His tongue shot against the roof of my mouth, pushing against the inside of my teeth. It moved like a sheep dog herding the flock, jumping in and out, hard and insistent.

Brian walked in and stared while Uncle Charlie jerked his head back and slipped his hand out in one quick movement. Brian looked at me, puzzled. A silence filled the room. My heart was pounding in my chest a shout that should have been my voice, should have been Brian's voice, should have filled the silence. Brian asked, "Are you all right?" I nodded, my breast throbbing against my shirt. He said, "It's time for bed." I nodded consent, my tongue tied down behind my teeth. "Good night, sweet heart," Uncle Charlie called to my back as I climbed the stairs. My jaw ached. I

watched myself from the ceiling as I moved silently, slowly.

Floating to the top of the stairs my breast relentlessly throbbing, I went into my bedroom and looked around, uncertain. The room seemed unfamiliar. It seemed barren. My breast hurt. I was surrounded by a cloud. The room was filled with whiteness. My eyes felt hard and puffy, longing to close. Sounds were muffled as if the air were stuffed full of cotton balls or as if I were under water. The throbbing in my breast had taken on a rhythm.

I wondered about the will of God. I wondered if God wanted this to happen to me to prepare me for something else. Maybe He wanted to make me strong because in the future I would be raped. Maybe this was a way for God in His loving wisdom to let me know I could survive a rape. I could survive the leering looks of my brother Matt as he said, "I can see what Uncle Charlie saw in you. You're really starting to fill out," and made an hour glass figure with his hands. I could survive the accusation of Chris: "Maybe she made it up. Uncle Charlie couldn't have done something like this." I could survive the stark, dark ringed, mournful gaze of my mother following me from room to room wordlessly begging, "What did I do wrong?" in silent ringing tones, her face gaunt with self absorbed guilt, though she never once asked me how I felt. I could survive the weeks before Uncle Charlie was placed in a home while he slipped me money under the dining room table, money I would later take and throw in the garbage, feeling inexplicably dirty at the touch of the cash, but secretly hoping my mother would fish it out and save it for me. I could survive the wordless tug of pride and fear rising in me as I viewed the strength of my own trembling rage with no way to slow it down, frame it, cage it, control it. I could survive all this, silent, watchful, waiting for the will of God.

At night, for comfort I would imagine my wedding. I would be dressed in a long white gown and my husband would stand beside me with his faceless Ken body. The altar would be covered in flowers. The candles and incense filling the church with the mysterious glow of holiness. The priest would say, "You may kiss the bride," and his hard tongue would invade my mouth.

***"Authority without wisdom is like
a heavy ax without an edge, fitter
to bruise than polish."***

--Anne Bradstreet

My Roommate's Girlfriend

Skittering leaves
show their pale
faces of fear
in the torrential onslaught
her long blonde hair
whips around
her face
watching the dog
run away
for hours
I avoid
falling branches,
in my shorts
with a Molson
calling the filthy hound
vertical fuck against the wall
FURtive
sweaty
bruises and rug burns
early morning
she dashes out of the bathroom to her door
nekkid
in sight for a second
sweeping the dishes off the counter
SMASH!
SLAM!
like animals
then
sliding with backs against the cabinets
small jars of spices
rolling on the floor

"Just tell her what you think."

"No, I don't think I could."

by Joe Healey

"If art is to nourish the
roots of our culture, so-
ciety must set the artist
free to follow his vision
wherever it takes him."

--John Fitzgerald
Kennedy

GERMINATION TERMINATION

I walked for days
Without painting my face
Surely I had no desire
Not an ounce to impress.
No men.
I was no where,
out to hate.
Oh numb existence!

A mother
Hears her child scream
Stands untouched
And not listening
To its pain.

A wall
Scraped and dull
Pounding headboard
Wooden, notches full.
Pillow soiled
Mouth in mid-night drool.

I laid and stared
Until white wall blankness
Entered my crate and remained.

Stolen
By the crushing,
Abdomen pain.

Enter me, exit me
Over and over
Over and over
Over and over.

Pain
It came
Both ways like that.

But bless the living souls.
Oh powerful universe!

Family, interwoven
Sweet electrical currents
Containing sound
Harmonious and melodic tune.

They bond
Form a scab
Natures way
Of healing the body,
The human way
Of nurturing the soul.

by Aimee York

I PITY MY FLESH

1

I stood on the board
my toes curled over the edge
watching the water
shimmer and roll.
A boy stood behind me on the ladder
waiting his turn to jump
after the fat assed bitch
taking her time because
her thighs tingled and trembled
from the height.
I thought his stare was a challenge.
I thought I'd dive
to show him up.
I thought I'd dive
like the endless, soaring sweep of the heron's
wing.
I thought I'd dive
like an aching sea gull call.

The solid crash of water.
Blue pain searing my spine.
A sharp circling gasp
"Hold on. Count.
One - Two - Three - Four."
Snapping the small of my back
in crushing slow silence then
the crazy siren scream,
"Breathe!"
My mind clamped a hand over my mouth
insisting,
"Hold on. Count.
One - Two - Three - Four."
Breaking the surface slowly
drifting frozen and brittle

waiting for the electric whipping
to slow down
ease off
free my legs to kick
to the side, cling and
breathe.

2

A strange pity invades me,
a sorrow for my body
susceptible to bad dives
and kiss stolen HIV.
My body that will certainly end up in a wheelchair
a cancer ward,
dying of pneumonia.
This body with streaming corpuscles
feeding cross stitched skin.
This divine, miraculous shell.
I stand here dying,
listening to blue noted jazz,
feeling the shiver of sex.
I'm dying diving off a board
into the flaccid air.
I'm dying kissing, receiving, fucking.
I'm dying as I write.
And I feel sorry for my flesh.
I feel sorry for my hair, my skin, my heart.
I feel sorry that I will pass so quickly
I think that I am beautiful
and this beauty should persist.
Heaven is a way to believe beauty never fades.
All I had to do was let the dive go,
curl into a cannon ball.
All I had to do was drop.

by Constance R. Sullivan

Widow

by T.J. Caulfield

It was a Saturday morning in October when I first consciously realized she was more than just following me. She had become a familiar face in the neighborhood and I had seen her in many of the local stores and taverns. When we would pass each other, we would give each other a friendly nod and "hello" and go on our way. Then, a strange thing started to happen. I would continue down a street after encountering her and there she would be again at the end of the block, smiling, out of breath, and asking me my name. I would say, "Now, now, I'm a little too old for you." She would smile and giggle. I thought it was something kind of

cute. I just figured she was lonely maybe a little strange, but harmless.

She was about twenty years older than me and wore black, always. It was either the coat with the furry collar or the blazer, depending on the weather, and they would be paired with a long tight skirt or polyester slacks. Her shoes were also black, and she never wore a pair that showed any part of her feet. A purse shaped like a cannon ball with a thin leather sling continually hung from her left shoulder weighting it down. Her face was round, and her cheekbones had the glow of a little girl who had been out in the cold too long. From a

("Widow" continued from page 25)

distance, her figure had the silhouette of a small bell.

At the time, I was a freshman at Baruch College. It's a City College down on 16th street and Park Ave. I love the area; it being so close to The Village. That particular Saturday morning, I was heading down to The Village to look for a new coat; after all, winter was only a few months away, and I needed one desperately. I stopped at Gees, the local candy and pornography store on the corner of 207th street and Broadway. There, I picked up some supplies for my journey: a pack of Marlboro Lights, a pack of Trident Original Flavor, a Mountain Dew, and the Daily News. The newspaper was so thin on Saturday and you still had to pay the same 35 cents you paid the rest of the week. I knew I was getting gypped out of pages even if they only were ads. When I left the store, she was coming towards me fast, and I was startled by her unexpected approach.

"Where are you going, what, what are you doing?" she said stuttering her words slightly. Her voice trembled; its volume was very high. A couple walking their dog across the street looked over with scrutinizing eyes.

"Um, hello, excuse me I'm in a hurry, take care," I replied while side-stepping past her down into the subway entrance. I never looked back to see how she reacted.

I reached the subway platform and headed for the last car. The last car was the one where you could smoke and not really bother anyone because they were probably there for the same reason. I don't know why I smoked but I did. I guess I thought it made me look cool or tough like James Dean. The car was a steamer; you start to sweat once you walk into it. It was just me and two homeless men in the last car. Both bummed a cigarette off me. We talked about the Mets losing to the Dodgers the night before in a play-off game. Each guy had a newspaper that he most likely lifted. While talking to them, I noticed a figure move swiftly into the car ahead of ours. I became uneasy and thought about that woman, the widow I called her. I wondered if she was that figure. She's crazy, I thought. I figured her husband died a horrible death maybe throat cancer, and she just liked young men. Knock it off, I told myself, just sit and read the paper. The conductor's static filled voice informed us of the time, 8:41, and warned us to watch the closing doors.

The train moved along quickly. Not many people rode this early on the weekend. Handfuls came and went after each stop, and nothing about them impressed me. I read article after article about the Mets and how they blew the game. After an hour, the train pulled into West 4th Street. The two homeless guys hit me up for another couple of cigs before I ran out the door. I was in the Unique Boutique clothing store within minutes after getting off the train. I slowly paced the

store, deliberately taking my time trying on many different coats. I needed something that could protect against the elements and look stylish.

I tried on an American Eagle hooded wool coat; it was brown and long. I buttoned it up all the way and pushed the hood up over my head. I looked in the mirror. After being pleased with what I saw, I decided to buy it. Turning around, I walked right into the widow. My heart jumped right out of my chest.

"Hi," she said, "what are you doing?"

"Jesus you scared the shit out of me," I said while backing away from her and bumping into the mirror. The cold sweat of my hands pressing against the mirror's surface. The two of us stood there looking at each other, her in all black and me brown like a bear.

Her eyes focused on the coat. Looking at it from bottom to top, she stopped at my face that was half hidden inside the hood. Her face scrunched together at the mouth and nose like a little girl who was pouting after losing a game of hopscotch. She rubbed her eyes as if something were in them. Then, her eyes became huge and she clasped her cheeks with her hands. "Oh my God! No! You bastard, don't touch me, don't touch me, you son of a bitch!" she wailed at the top of her lungs. Her face turned bright red, and she began to swing the cannonball purse over her head. Two sales people came rushing towards us while a third picked up a phone that was next to the register. Other customers looked on at the scene.

"Please, calm down everything is going to be all right," I said, holding my hands in front of my face getting ready to block a shot from her cannon ball purse.

"No, you bastard, you bastard, you look like him, my fucking brother Kenny," she cried.

The strap on her purse broke sending it flying through the large store window. People passing by huddled by the broken window like they were at a zoo looking at a rare animal. She dropped to the floor sobbing, mumbling, "Don't, don't say anything ever no never ever." People from the store gathered around her. I heard someone say the police were coming up the street. She looked up at me while her hands pulled at her hair.

"I'm sorry," I said looking directly into her eyes that looked like cracked blue glass. That was the last time I ever saw her. I spoke briefly with the police before they took her. I heard one cop say Bellevue and another a name I was not familiar with.

I think about her every once in awhile especially when I put on my brown wool coat.

"Creation is a drug I can't do without."--Cecil B. DeMille

the doorman blues

I wish my stomach would
stop rumbling.
it turns like a tank on a road
in a third world nation.
i remember a boy, who reached
out for an over-priced apple
at the korean deli on 65th and park.
it was a summer day, my lunch
break from the building, the bristol
plaza. o.j. has an apartment there.
owns the thirty-second floor
once hungry in the ghetto
he found pigskin
success and gorged at the table.
i smiled at the boy
with the dirty face and ripped sneakers.
handed him my brown
bag. a roast beef hero
something on it, some zingers,
and milk. i walked back to work
hungry that day.
fuck, it was just my lunch, big deal!
hunger will be back again and again—
hunger is hungry for those who are hungry!

by T. J. Caulfield**Untitled**

clean hills
shining in the light,
sun-sparkling snow,
trees
stark limbed
against the sky.
Silence only broken
by the cry
of one lone hawk
seeking sustenance
for survival
against the cold.
So soars my soul,
seeking food
for thought,
tranquilized yet agonized
by stolid winter's
crisp sterility
in sight and sound.
Yet, austerity aside,
it soothes,
beautiful,
serene,
if never green.

by Elizabeth Shaffer**LIVING**

I am afraid of dying too soon
suddenly stopping
falling quiet
still
and then nothing
I am afraid of dying too soon
when each breath is a brave
miracle of physics.
Lowering pressure outside the lungs
forcing them to suck in air,
forcing O2 molecules through
alveoli sacs to the waiting
fingers of blood
whispering through capillaries,
brushing waving tentacles across
the trapped air,
feeding
and carrying food.
This is breathing.
or
Hearing vibrations shaking
the spider web membrane,
drumming the air packed space
against y shaped cartilage,
sparking an electrical impulse
rippling along the spine of a nerve
exploding in myelinated brain
singing Do Wop Scat Jazz.
This is hearing
or
Shuddering, sizzling sex.
Adrenaline streaming in blood
sniffing out sweaty palms;
heart beats tripping in hasty embarrassment
though fluid rhythmic swaying hips have no shame
and drip with desire
longing for one absolute outrageous
pulsing penetration.
This is sex.
And
I wait trembling
for the next breath,
the next sound,
the next time I feel my lover's touch
skim over my arm,
the hair standing on end
and I know I am living.

by Constance R. Sullivan

EDGE CITY

OLD FRIENDS

I hate the smoke of her hatred
rattling in rigid lungs.
Dried dark blood
clotting in the air,
tasting of iron.
Darkness settling over her,
a suffocating cloak,
a heavy wet blanket,
choking.
I see her madness
marching across the room,
settling into her mouth,
hissing through her eyes.
I see the demon
leaning over her ear,
moving in like a tick,
sucking out her reason.
She coughs the caged rattle
in her ribs
spitting a warning.
I want to hide from that snake
escaping out her nose,
coiling in the air,
striking.
I'm afraid of growing old like her,
freezing in the smoke-filled creases
around her mouth,
Wondering if the taste of iron
is the taste of death
and if she unmasks
its bitter edge.
She coughs.
She slithers toward death,
slashing the air,
frantically tasting
her rusted rage.
I hate her for holding it,
wrestling it like an angel,
dancing with it
While I cover my eyes
cowering,
whistle a happy tune
cowering,
jerk away
Cursing her for spitting
dark clots
on my seamless skin.
Oh God ! I am dying,
I am choking on snakes of bitter blood.
I am rattling.
I am falling.
Why won't she shut up?

by Constance R. Sullivan

muddy souls

want to walk in bare feet
on Concrete
through Grass
in Mud up to my thighs—
want to spread my Arms out at my Sides
and
RUN!!!
run so Fast,
so Hard
so Far
and you will never Catch me
and you will never Find me
and I will never Come back.
Come On!
come On.
Come on!
i will no longer Hear
babies Crying
poor girls Dying
eighteen-wheelers Passing by.
i will no longer Feel
cold Stethoscope on bare flesh
chills of an Insult
next Thanksgiving.
i will no longer Have
nervous Shakes
empty Stomach
breakfast on the Couch.
i will no longer Be.
come on.

by Kate Griffith

Edge City will return next semester! Submissions are being accepted now. Deadlines will be posted around campus and in the Flashlight. Keep your eyes and ears open there is more edge to come.

